

Rights Leaders Ask Probe Of Dr. King Assassination

A-12

By Leon Dash

Washington Post Staff Writer

Civil rights activists the Rev. Ralph Abernathy and comedian Dick Gregory yesterday called upon President Ford to open a new "independent investigation" into the assassination over seven years ago of civil rights leader the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

During a 10-minute press conference in front of the White House, Abernathy, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said he wanted a new "thorough investigation into the tragic assassination of the most peaceful warrior of the 20th Century," King.

On Wednesday night, President Ford said at a White House press conference that an effort should be made to identify agents in the Federal Bureau of Investigation who conducted a campaign of character assassination against King.

Ford stopped short of saying that the FBI agents should be fired or prosecuted for their part in the campaign, however. The activities aimed at Dr. King were conducted at the direction of the late FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, according to a Senate intelligence report released last week.

"I certainly condemn those actions which were taken regarding Martin Luther King," Ford said. "I think it is

abhorrent to all Americans, including myself."

U.S. Attorney General Edward H. Levi on Monday instructed Assistant Attorneys General J. Stanley Pottinger, head of the Justice Department's civil rights division, and Richard L. Thornburgh, head of the criminal division, to review the FBI's investigation of the assassination of King. Levi told the two officials to consider if the investigation should be reopened.

Gregory said he does not think any new investigation into King's assassination in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968, should be conducted by the FBI because of the recent allegations regarding their harassment of King. "I'm not that interested in the FBI investigating itself," said Gregory. He said he believes the agency has "covered up" the King assassination.

Both Abernathy and Gregory said they had presented new evidence to the Justice Department and FBI last July 3, that James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of King, did not act alone.

"The evidence shows that more than one person was involved in the King assassination," Abernathy said. "I am calling for a new trial for James Earl Ray" so the new evidence could be examined, he said.

Both men said that Robert Byron Watson, in federal

prison in Ashland, Kentucky, and C.H. Andrews, alias R.L. Warren, incarcerated at the Mimico Correctional Institute in Toronto, Canada, have new evidence to provide in connection with King's death. They said they did not know what charges Watson and Andrews have been convicted of.

Thirty-two persons, including city councilman David A. Clarke, marched in front of the White House yesterday in support of the demand for a new investigation into King's death.

Clarke, former director of the now defunct Washington bureau of SCLC, said "I think there are enough reasons to have the investigation reopened."

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Carl T. Rowan

The FBI and Dr. King — unanswered questions

In this column, almost exactly a year ago, I wrote the following about the FBI's attempt to destroy Dr. Martin Luther King:

"Is it a proper FBI function for agents to mail to the wife of a man the FBI director despises a tape recording suggesting that the man has a sexual affair going with another woman? Should this tape be used this way primarily because agents close to the FBI director hope that sending it to the wife will activate the hated man's tendency toward suicide? This was done under Hoover."

The front pages of America recently have blared forth most of the story of J. Edgar Hoover's grisly plot to destroy the reputation and influence of Dr. King. With FBI officials now acknowledging these monstrous efforts to destroy the civil rights leader, I write not to say "I told you so."

I wish only to have Americans realize that what I wrote in 1974, but more importantly what I wrote in many columns about Hoover and the FBI in 1969, was true.

When I first revealed what Hoover and the FBI had done to Dr. King, for reasons of Hoover's venality, personal spite, political ideology, I stirred up quite a fuss. I shall never forget that when Vera Glaser and Marilyn Stephenson asked Hoover who had started the controversy over illegal wiretaps, the late FBI

"That racist columnist, Rowan." Millions of Americans were a lot more prepared to believe that I was a black racist, forced by paranoia to make "incredible" charges against Mr. FBI, than to believe that Hoover would engage in blackmail and other crimes.

How could Americans believe that hero Hoover almost died of apoplexy when Time magazine named King "Man of the Year", that he would encourage a scurrilous attempt at blackmail designed to induce suicide to prevent Dr. King from even accepting the Nobel peace prize, that he would lobby Congress to try to force USIA not to distribute abroad a film of the massive 1963 civil rights march of which the Reverend King was a leader.

Now that the Senate and various FBI officials have made it clear that I knew what I was writing about six years ago, perhaps you'll treat seriously what I'm about to say:

I am utterly convinced that the FBI knows a lot more about the assassination of Dr. King than has ever been revealed.

The FBI kept Dr. King under both electronic and physical surveillance right up to the time he was killed, and the campaign to destroy his reputation continued long after the assassination in Memphis.

Hoover passed around "top secret" documents

every time King smiled at a woman, or vice versa. Given this kind of surveillance, why were there no FBI "informants" around to see someone firing a gun at Dr. King?

I look back at notes I took during private sessions with top FBI personnel when the FBI supposedly was pressing one of its largest man-hunts in history — looking for Dr. King's killer. I view those notes in the light of recent revelations regarding FBI activities here at home and CIA assassination attempts abroad, and I personally become convinced that the FBI never told the American people the whole truth about King's murder.

I recall the strange difficulties James Earl Ray, who was imprisoned for the killing, had with his attorneys. I note the repeated squelching of his claims that he is the patsy for other conspirators. I look back at the evidence and am personally convinced that killing Dr. King was not conceived — perhaps not even executed — by James Earl Ray alone.

We may never know the whole truth. But that Senate committee ought to go on and explore the question of whether, when King's bitter enemies failed to blackmail him into committing suicide, they took other means to "eliminate" him.

The mere thought is grotesque. But given the facts at hand, can we ignore the possibility

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Levi Orders Justice Review Of King Death Investigation

From News Services

Atty. Gen. Edward H. Levi has asked top Justice Department officials to review the FBI investigation of the 1968 murder of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and to make a recommendation about whether to reopen the probe.

A department spokesman said today that Levi took the action on Monday in view of testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee that the FBI, under J. Edgar Hoover's regime, carried out an extensive campaign to destroy King as a civil rights leader.

The spokesman said Levi asked Assistant Attorneys General J. Stanley Pottinger and Richard L. Thorn-

burgh "to review the case and to recommend to me whether the investigation should be reopened." Pottinger heads the civil division and Thornburgh the criminal division.

KING, PRESIDENT of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and winner of a Nobel Peace Prize for his crusade for human rights, was shot to death on a motel balcony during a visit to Memphis, Tenn., in April 1968. The murder triggered urban rioting in major cities, including Washington.

Levi's action "is not in itself a reopening of the matter," said spokesman John Wilson. "He has no indica-

tion that the original investigation was anything less than thorough."

In fact, a civil rights attorney involved in the investigation has told Levi that the probe was "incredibly good," he has reported.

THE FBI investigation of the assassination of King, including the arrest of James Earl Ray, who pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison in Tennessee, has a recent petition for a new trial was denied.

The Senate committee started this month that Hoover accused King a "dangerous" black leader. See KATV, 4-1

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Page 4-1

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KING

Continued From A-1
and instructed agents to do all they could to blunt his effectiveness as the nation's top civil rights leader.

Agents sent King one anonymous letter suggesting that he commit suicide rather than face disgrace on some undisclosed allegations, the committee said.

The FBI told the committee this month it could find "no statutory basis or justification" for some 25 harassment actions against King.

FBI DIRECTOR Clarence M. Kelley, meanwhile, says he probably won't punish agents involved in a harassment campaign against thousands of Americans if the Justice Department doesn't prosecute the agents.

Kelley said in an interview yesterday that he is not considering disciplinary action against the agents "in the absence of any direct allegations of involvement in something illegal."

He suggested that the agents should not be punished for taking part in a disruption campaign they believed to be legal.

Kelley was questioned about possible disciplinary action against agents still with the FBI who were involved in a decades-long counter-intelligence operation against the New Left, black militants, civil rights organizations and other groups.

Kelley he agrees with an FBI official's testimony before the Senate committee that there was no legal justification for the campaign against King.

Kelley said "there might be some justification" for

firing or reassigning agents involved if they knew their acts might be illegal.

"But at the time of the program," Kelley said, "this did not seem to be a part of the thinking of those who did participate. If they know it's illegal, I think this places upon them a responsibility. But there is no indication that any who participated knew or even thought that it was illegal to do these things."

HE ADDED, "I'm very firmly of the opinion" that the top-level officials who ordered the campaign must bear responsibility for it. Few of those directly implicated are alive and none are with the FBI now.

Kelley said he has urged agents to challenge any order they consider improper. The dispute "will be resolved before he is requested or commanded to do something," he said.

Such protests ordinarily should be lodged with supervisors, "but if an agent prefers to write or talk with me directly, he may do so," the director added. But Kelley said he doesn't recall any agent challenging the propriety of an order during the 2½ years he has been director.

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The Death of Dr. King

CBS' 'Compelling' Quest

By John Carmody

The third in CBS' four-part series on "The American Assassins" tonight examines the circumstances of the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968.

The documentary, at 10:30 p.m. on Channel 9 (delayed for the conclusion of a Washington Bullets game), makes a powerful case for an "outside investigation" of both the circumstances

Preview

and motives surrounding the King assassination.

It removes itself, as best it can, from the strong emotions surrounding the case by making a clinical, dispassionate presentation of the facts.

The hour is not "entertaining" or exciting television. It is compelling journalism wrapped in the cold power of a well-constructed courtroom argument.

Correspondent Dan Rather points out tonight, the King case differed in several respects from the others—that of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and the attempt on George Wallace—discussed in the CBS series.

King's assassin, James Earl Ray, is the only one of the accused assassins to plead guilty, though he has withdrawn the plea. Thus his is the only case still before the courts. Ray seems the least politically motivated of all the accused assassins in the four cases.

Most importantly, says Rather, unlike the John Kennedy assassination, the King case "never came under the same constant, searching scrutiny"—until November 1975, when the Senate Intelligence Committee revealed the FBI

had actually sent in 1964, what seemed to be a cruel, even unbelievable invitation to Dr. King to commit suicide.

That kind of harassment and the moving circumstances of Dr. King's last hours in Memphis—his strike leadership and his last, prophetic speech on April 3—are never far from the viewer's mind tonight as the program examines the forensic and chronological evidence surrounding the murder.

The on-the-scene investigation ticking off the main points of evidence in the case against Ray seems to prove the evidence was largely circumstantial.

Yet Ray did manage a clever escape from Memphis; one that took him to Canada, England, Portugal and back to London, where he finally was arrested, months later. That journey, plausible and yet oddly mysterious, still lingers in the background of the King case, as does the lack of motivation for the killing itself.

During the CBS probe, says Rather, they learned of several suspected plotting groups, including "unnamed money interests," white racists, black militants, communists, the CIA—even the Quebec Liberation Front.

That, of course, is the heart of the mystery in the death of Dr. King. Ray's contention that his confession of guilt was not free and voluntary will be settled in the courts.

But what of the forces behind Ray or someone not yet identified? That is the baffling questions that this hour could not possibly answer, but which nags the American public. According to a CBS poll taken in conjunction with this series, 80 per cent of those polled thought Ray "was involved with others; that is, that there was a conspiracy." This program seems to prove there are abundant legal reasons to reopen the case and either still or confirm such widely-held suspicions.

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CBS Explores

By Jay Sharbutt
Associated Press

King Assassination

NEW YORK — CBS News offers tonight a one-hour TV study (WTOP-9, 10:30 p.m.) of the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whether James Earl Ray did it, and, if so, whether he acted alone or as part of a conspiracy.

Ray pleaded guilty in a Tennessee court in 1969 to King's slaying in Memphis, but renounced that plea, to no avail. He later failed in a federal court bid to withdraw his plea and go on trial, but a new effort by him now is pending before a federal appeals court.

IN TONIGHT'S show, correspondent Dan Rather says CBS News, in its probe into the slaying of King, the black civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner, tried to interview Ray in prison.

"But due to the repeated advice of his lawyers, he wouldn't talk for this broadcast," he adds. "So the best witness stands mute."

Like CBS' two-part November study of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, tonight's show revisits the scene of the slaying, re-studies the evidence and interviews various persons, ranging from one of Ray's current lawyers to a Memphis landlady who rented Ray a room.

IN THE KENNEDY shows, CBS cautiously concluded that while "it may never be established" whether Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone, "the evidence indicates" that Oswald "probably did" shoot Kennedy.

There's none of that in tonight's show. CBS fails to turn up any evidence of a conspiracy to kill King and doesn't offer any opinion, even a cautiously worded one, on whom it thinks may have killed him.

It simply says, among other things, that Tennessee's case against Ray as a lone assassin "was not as air-tight as we had been told," that no one saw the fatal shot fired and that there's no evidence Ray was near the scene of King's death "at the moment of the murder."

And it reiterates that "what seemed to be unquestionable proof — an unqualified plea of guilty — now is in legal contest" and that a federal appellate court decision on Ray's case may come soon.

SO, DESPITE its work, the show winds up sounding the let's-have-an-independent-investigation call CBS News first made at the end of its November probe into the Kennedy assassination.

At that time, it said "history will be less confused" if new congressional probes are made about information CBS said was withheld from the Warren Commission by the CIA and the FBI.

Tonight, it says that regardless of the court decision Ray gets, doubts about the circumstances of King's assassination still will remain and "an outside investigation is now needed" to attempt to resolve those doubts.

IT SAID THE probe could be made either by Congress or by an independent commission appointed by the president.

On Monday night, CBS will air the last of its four-program series on the shootings of major American leaders. It says that show will study the "doubts and discrepancies" surrounding the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., and the attempted assassination of Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama.

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Study of Dr. King's Death Finds No Links to F.B.I.

This is the first of two articles on renewed questions about the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It was written by John M. Crewdson and is based on reporting by Mr. Crewdson, Ben A. Franklin, Nicholas M. Kurreck and Martin Waldron.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 31—For agency that could prosecute nearly eight years ago the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has puzzled many people, officials and even some government officials who were skeptical that James Earl Ray, an escaped ex-convict with an obvious antipathy toward the black civil rights leader, had been the lone assassin, despite Mr. Ray's own admission of guilt in court.

Last month when the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence disclosed that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had carried out a secret six-year effort to discredit Dr. King publicly, questions were suddenly being asked in official quarters: Might the F.B.I. itself have been involved in some way in the murder of Dr. King at a Memphis motel on April 4, 1968?

Pressure for an investigation of the F.B.I.'s harassment of Dr. King was immediate. The Senate committee considered extending its own investigation but decided to leave it to some

agency that could prosecute if evidence warranted. When the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division began an examination—the first of the 96-volume archive of F.B.I. had compiled on Dr. King.

About the same time, the New York Times began an inquiry into the case. Although limited by Mr. Ray's refusal to talk with reporters and by lack of access to the still-classified Justice Department and F.B.I. files, reporters investigated many questions about Dr. Ray's possible motives, movements, money and connections and the activities of the F.B.I.

After numerous interviews over six weeks with press and former officials of the Justice Department and F.B.I., lawyers and others familiar with the case, The Times found no evidence that was implicate the F.B.I. either directly or indirectly in the killing.

Sources familiar with the investigation by the Senate committee asserted that it

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The Justice Department's re-examination of the case...

But many other questions remain open. The Justice Department's investigation itself is charged with a broader task than merely finding out whether the F.B.I. had a hand in the murder. It is also trying to determine the extent of the "dirty tricks" played against Dr. King and whether any of them involved illegality. The inquiry is looking at the F.B.I. files for possible deviations in the bureau's original investigation of the murder or for evidence of a conspiracy itself.

Any such revelation has thus far failed to light, according to Justice Department and F.B.I. sources, in which the bureau's efforts to discredit Dr. King overlapped with his investigation of his murder.

In that instance, which appears to be of no consequence, the F.B.I.'s Intelligence Division provided to its General Investigative Division the name of a Los Angeles dentist with whose estranged wife Dr. King had been filmed by F.B.I. intelligence agents entering and leaving motel rooms as well as overheard talking on the telephone, according to the source.

The F.B.I.'s assassination investigation, considering the possibility that Dr. King's murder might have been arranged by a Jewish husband, interviewed both the dentist and his wife and concluded that the man knew nothing of the crime.

Preconceptions Denied

Although none of them cited that particular incident as an example, many of the F.B.I. personnel who talked to The Times emphasized that they approached the King murder case with no preconceptions about whether a conspiracy had existed.

As one put it, "We didn't have the slightest damned idea who or what was behind the killing at the outset, and he noted that the F.B.I. had officially considered a number of possibilities, including the theory that the killer was an agent of a foreign power. He said that the F.B.I. had not been told that the man knew nothing of the crime."

...the Justice Department's re-examination of the case...

On March 28, 1968, Dr. King and other officials of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a Civil Rights Organization, went to Memphis, to lead a march in support of striking municipal garbage workers. The dispute quickly turned into a violent protest when some demonstrators began smashing shop windows. Dr. King and his aides retreated from the violence to the Rivermont, several blocks from the black-owned Lorraine

Hotel and Motel in a rundown section of the city, where the King party had previously stayed.

Dr. King left Memphis the day after the disastrous march with a promise to mount another protest as soon as tempers cooled, and when he did return, on April 3—the day before he died—he and his entourage installed themselves at the Lorraine, on whose open-air balcony, he was shot down the following evening.

The discovery of the F.B.I. proposal to embarrass Dr. King publicly for having stopped at the white-owned Rivermont the week before opened the possibility in the minds of Justice Department lawyers that the F.B.I. might have been indirectly responsible for, or even tried to engineer, Dr. King's staying at the Lorraine Motel.

But the Justice Department's investigation of the matter, which has included interviews with F.B.I. agents responsible for the proposal and a review of the Memphis press during the period in question, has produced, one official said, no evidence that the F.B.I. even tried to encourage the publication of such a story.

Nothing, the official said, appeared in either of the Memphis newspapers, The Commercial Appeal or The Press-Scimitar, taunting Mr. King for his brief stay at the Rivermont.

Moreover, former aides to Dr. King have told the Department that his party did not go to the Rivermont Motel of its own volition in the first place but was taken there by the Memphis police, who believed it the most secure place for Dr. King in stay until the

...the Justice Department's re-examination of the case...

A number of F.B.I. agents, many of them in the Memphis office, had been assigned to guard Dr. King and his aides since they had been angered by Dr. King's criticism of the bureau's civil rights activities in the South. They expressed offense at his personal morals and were concerned

that his association with purported Communist sympathizers might give the American Communist Party a degree of control over black voters in the South.

Although knowledge of harassment aimed at Dr. King was confirmed to top officials at F.B.I. headquarters, some lesser executives did not know of the minor disruptions and physical and electronic surveillance of which he was a target.

But these persons and others, including Justice Department officials who read the product of the F.B.I.'s investigation as it flowed into headquarters in 1968, the bureau's efforts to find Dr. King's killer had been unstinting.

There is, however, at least one indication that the F.B.I. investigation may have been tardy in following up an important lead—a fingerprint clue.

Several former F.B.I. and Justice Department officials noted that whatever Mr. Hoover's views might have been, the pressure on the bureau to find the killer had been intense both from Attorney General Ramsey Clark and President Johnson. One former official called Mr. Clark "a heavy hammer." Another said President Johnson "was quite provoked at us" because it took the F.B.I. ten months and four days to find Mr. Ray.

'We Had to Solve It'

One former F.B.I. official with responsibility for the King investigation noted that charges at the time by some black and racial whites that the bureau could be accused of holding back on the case "were the other way."

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Revels past and present Justice Department lawyers pointed out that, to take a cynical view, whatever the degree of Mr. Hoover's personal dislike for Dr. King, it would not have been in the F.B.I. director's interest to see the black leader martyred, but rather to relay to Dr. King every threat brought to the bureau's attention in the hope of frightening him out of the civil rights movement.

Delay on Identification

er said, "that it puzzled
that it took the FBI as
long as it did to come up
with [the name of] James Earl
Ray."

One facet of the F.B.I. investigation that remains a mystery — Mr. Pottinger has asked the bureau not to comment publicly on the case in view of Mr. Ray's appeal for a new trial — is the passage of 15 days between the shooting of Dr. King and the bureau's identification of the suspected killer as James Earl Ray.

rig number on it. For some reason, the F.B.I. apparently did not check out the radio serial number until after Mr. Ray was arrested.

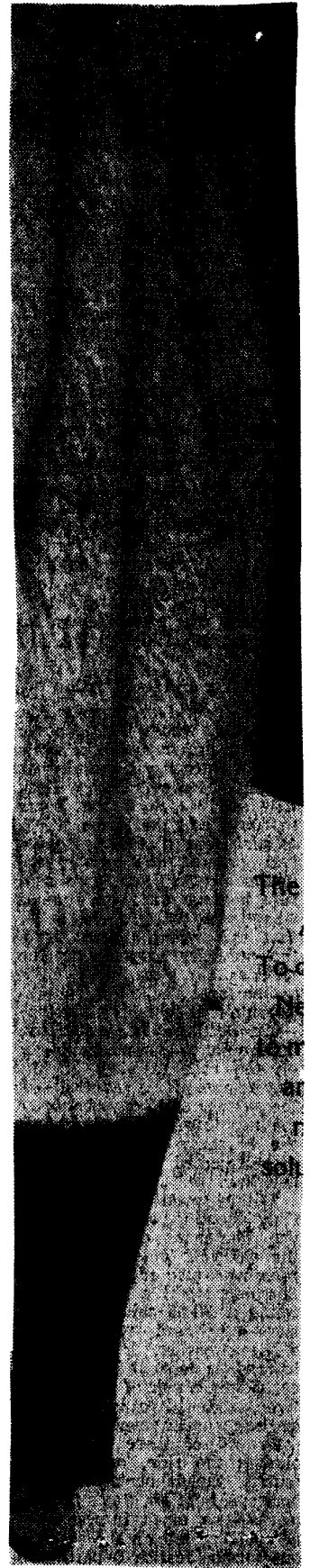
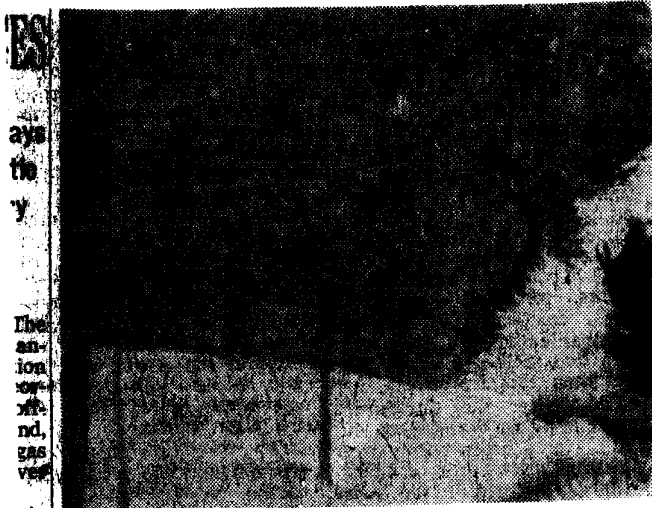
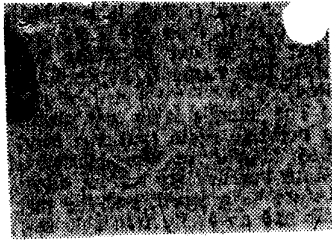
The bundle was shipped under guard to the F.B.I. laboratory in Washington, arriving less than 12 hours after the shooting. And yet, by all available accounts, no search of the bureau's fingerprint files was begun until April 18, when F.B.I. agents, retracing Mr. Ray's steps, discovered in a room he had rented in Atlanta a map that yielded a nearly perfect latent thumb print.

Only after the thumbprint was rushed to Washington did F.B.I. clerks begin poring over the fingerprint cards of 53,000 Federal fugitives, in the belief

They were right and they were also lucky. Mr. Ray's prints on file in that group because of his escape from the Missouri State Penitentiary the year before, were on the 70th card the clerk examined.

The next day, April 13, the F.B.I. announced that the man it was seeking, whom it had known up to that early by the aliases of Eric Starvo Galt, John Willard and Harvey Lowmeyer, was Mr. Ray. What remains unclear is why the successful file search was not begun sooner, with the latent fingerprints lifted from the items in the bundle.

Tomorrow: The conspiracy question.



(1)
MURKIN

Ray Tells House Unit He's Ready

By Jeremiah O'Leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

James Earl Ray, who pleaded guilty to the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. but is now claiming the plea was unlawfully obtained, has declared he is ready to testify under oath before the House Select Committee on Assassinations about the case.

Ray made his offer in a letter to New York Times columnist Anthony Lewis, copies of which he sent to The Washington Star and to the House committee. But Ray's Washington lawyer, James H. Lesar, said the offer was made without his knowledge.

Lesar said there is nothing to prevent the committee — which is investigating the murders of King and President John F. Kennedy — from issuing a subpoena for Ray, but added that nothing could compel Ray to testify against himself.

RAY HAS SPENT eight years in prison, much of it in solitary confinement in the Brushy Mountain Penitentiary at Petros, Tenn., serving a 99-year sentence since he pleaded guilty to the April 1968 murder of King in Memphis. Ray has been attempting to have his guilty plea set aside and has sought a new trial.

The prisoner appeared to have exhausted this series of efforts earlier this month when the Supreme Court affirmed lower court decisions rejecting a request for habeas corpus. In previous efforts, Ray failed in the Criminal Court of Shelby County, the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals and the Tennessee Supreme Court to have his guilty plea set aside on the grounds that it was coerced.

Informed sources say that House committee Director Richard A. Sprague wants to get Ray on the witness stand but prefers that his investigators interview Ray first.

Lesar said yesterday he has had two confrontations with Sprague about methods the chief counsel has used in an attempt to interview Ray and to obtain a waiver of the attorney-client privilege from Ray.

"The committee staff informed me," Lesar said, "that they intended to show up at Brushy Mountain to talk to Ray. I objected to Sprague about this and sent a telegram which said this was an arrogant and improper practice."

"The committee agreed to go through me. I met Sprague and he promised to go through counsel to Ray. Then the committee approached other attorneys for Ray for a waiver of the attorney-client relationship. Again I protested to Sprague and the committee."

Ray has objected to all interviews except those conducted with him by attorney Robert Weisberg who has written several inflammatory fiery books on the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. The lawyer has been accused of being a double agent for the government and the defense.

RAY'S LETTER to Lewis, with copies sent to The Star and the committee, apparently was written without his attorney's knowledge. The letter, dated Dec. 26, criticized a recent book about Ray's life, written by George McMillan, and reviews published by The Star and the New York Times.

Ray wrote:

"But having to assume legally that you do consider McMillan's (sic) novel the last word on the case, I'll herein issue collectively to you and the above referred to literati an invitation to consider

carrying your prissy asses before the select committee, and I shall do likewise with my latest tobacco-road one, and we shall let under such terms money determine the facts."

Committee sources did not say whether they had received Ray's letter or would they indicate what course of action would be taken. Sprague could not be reached for comment. But sources close to the investigation say there is no doubt that Sprague wants to get Ray on the stand and would prefer to have him there voluntarily rather than as a subpoenaed witness.

The question before the House investigation is whether Ray acted alone in murdering King or was part of a wider conspiracy. Lesar said Ray is innocent. But Ray's guilty plea obviated an open trial.

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Panel Told Ray Had a Contact After Murder

By George Lardner Jr.

Washington Post Staff Writer

The House Select Committee on Assassinations says it has received an uncorroborated report that James Earl Ray received "instructions" from a secret contact in Europe following the April, 1968, murder of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

Del. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D. C.), chairman of the subcommittee investigating the King assassination, said the contact was supposed to have taken place in Portugal, one of several countries to which Ray fled before he was arrested at London's Heathrow Airport on June 8, 1968.

Fauntroy acknowledged in a telephone interview that the report was uncorroborated, but he said it came from someone he regards as "a reliable source" who has spoken with Ray.

Ray is serving a 99-year state prison term in Tennessee for King's murder, to which Ray pleaded guilty.

The information received by the committee is mentioned briefly in a 26 page report that the House committee has drafted to outline its plans for investigating the deaths of King and President Kennedy.

The committee says it has been told that Ray contacted another person from whom he received further instructions to aid in his continuing flight out of the United States.

Fauntroy declined to add any more details, but committee investigators have reportedly been told that Ray was supposed to have received instructions for getting money to continue his trip from Portugal to Belgium.

According to Fauntroy, the committee's immediate source is someone "who has never previously been interviewed by any investigative agency" and is neither a Ray relative nor one of his attorneys.

One of Ray's most recent visitors at Brushy Mountain State Prison was Mark Lane, an outspoken critic of the government's investigations of both the King and Kennedy assassinations, but he denied yesterday that he was the source.

In fact, Lane said, "I have some doubts about it. What he told me certainly contravenes it. He told me that when he fled the United States, he was fleeing from everyone."

Ray has contended since his imprisonment that he was just "a fall guy" in a conspiracy to murder King. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, recently refused to review his guilty plea.

Even by the House committee's admittedly incomplete account, "something happened in Portugal" that kept Ray from going to Belgium and ultimately Africa, his destination. Instead he returned to England where he was captured.

The House committee's report is expected to be made public shortly before Congress convenes Jan. 4. House investigators are seeking a \$6.5 million budget which they say is necessary for a thorough and independent investigation.

Ray escaped from prison in Missouri on April 23, 1967, almost a year before King's death.

"We suspect he had a number of contacts over that year," Fauntroy said. "These are among the leads we'll be able to pursue thoroughly if we succeed in getting the basic budget requested," he said.

Committee investigators do not claim to know the identity of Ray's supposed contact while he was in Portugal, but Fauntroy said the source of the story "is of such reliability that we feel confident the lead is worth following."

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JFK-King investigators requesting \$6.5 million

By JOHN GEDDIE

Washington Bureau of The News

WASHINGTON — The House Assassination Committee voted Thursday to request \$6.5 million in first year funding to investigate the murders of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

Committee members acknowledged that the size of the budget may shock many members of the House — the Public Works Committee, one of the largest, operates on a budget of about \$2 million — but they agreed with committee director Richard Sprague that the figure is the minimum necessary for a full, independent investigation.

Sprague indicated he will not remain in his position if Congress cuts the budget, which would finance 170 persons, foreign and domestic travel and backup equipment.

The director presented his budget proposal to the House Democratic Caucus later Thursday, but there was no formal comment from members. Rep. John B. Anderson of Illinois, Republican conference chairman and a member of the assassination committee, said he was optimistic that the full budget will be approved.

SEVERAL MEMBERS of Congress from both parties expressed surprise at the proposal and predicted it may become the center of heated debate, but they would not comment on the record.

Sprague attempted to justify the \$3.5 million salary request by pointing out

that he opposes using FBI or CIA investigators because the actions of those agencies will be part of the probe. In addition to publicized instances in which the agencies either destroyed evidence or failed to report information to the Warren Commission, he said, his investigators are already studying the surveillance and security activities of the FBI at the time of King's death in Memphis.

He said Congress would "appear foolish" if federal agents were allowed to participate in the new investigation.

Sprague also revealed in a status report to the committee that investigators have talked to persons who discussed "certain matters" with James Earl Ray, who is serving a life term in the King case. As another example to support his request for a large staff, Sprague said some witnesses do not want to "deal with" federal agents.

He also said his investigators have located persons who were present at Parkland Hospital when a bullet was found on John Connally's stretcher. The "magic bullet" which the Warren Commission said went through Kennedy and wounded Connally has been the subject of controversy, with some persons claiming it was "planted" to be found at the hospital. Sprague said his witnesses had never been interviewed by law enforcement officials.

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

"The Dallas Morning News", Dallas, Texas

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Date: 12-10-76

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Editor: Tom J. Simmons

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Associated Press Wirephoto.

Richard A. Sprague . . . the director of the House Committee on Assassinations.

UNDER THE BUDGET proposal, the staff would be composed of two units — one for each murder case — made up of 15 lawyers and 25 investigators each. There would also be five lawyers in a separate legal unit, 30 staff members in the document analysis and research unit, four in a polygraph and psychological stress unit, nine in administration and 35 secretary-clerks.

Sprague's "bare bones" budget estimates that \$1.6 million will be needed for staff travel and expenses. Consultant services, including fingerprint and handwriting experts, neutron activation and photography experts and translators would cost an estimated \$100,000 each year.

The telephone bill, estimated at 250 calls per day at \$5 per call plus the basic service charge, is listed at \$425,000 in the budget. The committee would lease copying and computer services and purchase tape recorders, cameras, portable polygraph machines and stress evaluators. Two "mini-phone recording devices" would be purchased for \$4,400. Security devices for staff offices are listed at \$10,000.

If the full budget is not accepted, Sprague said, "we might as well forget about it."

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Independent Inquiry Sought In Dr. King's Assassination

KING, From A1

ducted by persons independent of the Justice Department, which has policy control over the FBI.

According to the sources, Pottinger is recommending that the committee of inquiry look into such questions as whether there was any FBI complicity in King's death, whether the FBI violated any laws or policy guidelines in its dealings with King, and whether any conspiracy, say, of persons outside government, was connected to the murder.

The sources said the study committee, as envisioned in Pottinger's report, would have no prosecutorial function. Instead, it would review the record, hear new evidence, if any, and advise the Attorney General whether it believes that there are grounds for pursuing the King case, technically never closed, with a renewed investigation.

The sources said that Justice Department officials believe that a study committee can be named under the provisions of the 1972 Advisory Commission Act, which was designed to provide better public insight into government operations. The legislation requires that at least one member be a government official with the power to convene and dismiss meetings.

However, the sources added, Pottinger's recommendation will be that most, if not all, of the other members be drawn from outside the government. Although the sources would not speculate on names they said it seemed obvious that some would be persons prominent in the civil rights movement.

Questions about the King case have been growing since last November when the Senate intelligence committee hearings revealed that the late FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, had inspired

a secret, six-year campaign to harass and try to discredit King. Agents bugged Dr. King's telephone conversations and sent him an anonymous letter containing defamatory information about his personal life.

Ray, who has told a murky and contradictory story about his involvement in the murder, is now seeking to overturn his 99-year prison sentence and win a new trial. His lawyers have said that if his appeal is granted, Ray will attempt to prove that he was coerced into pleading guilty to the killing.

These developments caused Levi to direct the Civil Rights Division, which is headed by Pottinger, to



J. STANLEY POTTINGER
... headed the review

review federal records relating to the assassination for any additional light they might shed on the FBI's campaign against King and its pursuit of Ray.